

August 4, 2017



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ALERTS COMMUNITY OF INCREASE IN SYPHILIS IN LEE COUNTY

Fort Myers, Fla. – The Florida Department of Health in Lee County is advising medical providers and citizens of a spike in confirmed cases of infectious syphilis in Lee County. As of July, Lee County is experiencing a 39 percent increase in reported cases of infectious syphilis compared to this time last year.

“With the significant increase in confirmed cases of syphilis, the Florida Department of Health feels it is vital to alert our community of these alarming numbers,” said Angela M. Smith, Department of Health Administrator. “While syphilis is a curable disease, an infected person must be treated as quickly as possible”.

Thus far this year, Lee County has 106 cases of confirmed early syphilis (infected within a year before testing positive) as opposed to the 92 cases for the entire year of 2016.

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) that is spread from person to person during intercourse or any sexual activity. Syphilis is an STD that has several stages with symptoms appearing within one to 12 weeks after having sex. Often, symptoms are internal, so the person does not know they are infected. The only way to know if a person has syphilis is to have a syphilis test.

Symptoms of syphilis can include a painless sore in the genital or rectal area, a painless sore or mucous patches in the mouth and swollen lymph glands. A person with syphilis may also have a non-itchy skin rash on the bottoms of the feet, palms of hand, chest or all over the body.

If untreated, syphilis can spread to the brain, spinal cord, or heart; this can lead to blindness, dementia, paralysis, deafness, loss of balance, and miscarriage or passing of the infection to a baby during pregnancy or childbirth, which can lead to irreversible damage and even death in the infant.

Pregnant women, by Florida Statute, are to be tested for syphilis, Herpes, HIV and other STDs in the first and third trimesters. Men who have sex with men, people with multiple sex partners, injection drug users and others at risk should be tested regularly. Those at risk for syphilis are also at risk for HIV, Gonorrhea and Chlamydia. Simple blood (for syphilis and HIV) and urine and swab tests (for Gonorrhea and Chlamydia) are all that is needed to test for these infections. Lee County has seen an increase in each of these infections as well over last year.

For more information on STDs and HIV or how to obtain a test, contact Diana L. Prat, STD Program Manager, at the Department of Health in Lee County at 239-656-2539.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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